



What is our vision?

Acorn's vision is for the Worthing area to be a place in which no one has to experience pregnancy loss or unintended pregnancy unsupported and where all young people are able to learn the story of pregnancy.

How do we seek to achieve this?

- We provide free confidential non-directive counselling to anyone, male or female, impacted by pregnancy loss or unintended pregnancy.
- We offer counselling in person at our Worthing premises or alternatively by telephone or online depending on client preference.
- We take sessions with year 10 students in local secondary schools covering relationships and pregnancy as part of the PSHE curriculum.



What have the activity levels been over the last year?

Counselling:

73 clients made contact with us during the year, of which 37 came to appointments for counselling. Four of these were for unintended pregnancy and the remainder for pregnancy loss (mainly miscarriage, abortion or termination for medical reasons). There were 210 x 1 hour sessions.



Schools:

In total we will deliver over 70 sessions. Normally this is to a class of around 30 but this year Steyning Grammar asked us to deliver the sessions to all their year 10 students (totalling more than 300) in two sessions. The team rose to the challenge well.

In the current academic year we are providing interactive sessions in 8 local secondary schools: Angmering, Bohunt, St Oscar Romero, The Sir Robert Woodard Academy, St Andrews, Shoreham Academy, Sion, and The Littlehampton Academy.

Who delivers them?

We have a counselling team and a schools' team.

The counselling team comprises 4 members (including Claire who we welcomed to the team this year). Supervision is provided on a fortnightly basis.

The schools' team comprises 7 presenters and assistants. Our thanks to Mary Parish and Jan Peacock who are both stepping down from the schools' team this year after around 8 years. We do appreciate all they have done for Acorn. We are pleased that Caroline and Monika have joined the team and as ever we are grateful to Steph Spanner for leading the work.

Where do counselling referrals come from and how does Acorn advertise its service?

Acorn has been established now for 31 years and is known for providing a professional and supportive counselling service. Referrals come from many sources and over the last year the key ones have been:

- 27% GPs
- 13% NHS West Sussex Talking Therapies
- 13% Counselling Midwife
- 13% Friends
- 13% Website/ social media

Acorn seeks to advertise its service in as many ways as possible

Acorn's social media and marketing officer Charlotte Bailey continues to post content on social media and we are grateful for her work in this field.

This year we have had an advert on 2 Compass buses (pictured) and we want to thank Chris Chatfield and Compass Travel for this.

We produce a regular newsletter and our leaflets are in several outlets. This year we will be developing a leaflet that also highlights our work amongst men.

We visit groups and provide presentations to promote the service. We also make direct contact with anyone who is interested in Acorn. This year we have provided displays at freshers' fairs at Northbrook and Worthing colleges, had discussions with the Broadwater Baptist pastoral team, attended the High Sheriff's Mental Health Conference and welcomed the leader of Worthing Council to our premises.

We remain closely in touch with other similar West Sussex-based pregnancy counselling groups holding regular meetings with them.



How is the charity run?

During the year there have been 5 trustees – my co trustees being Pam Denman, Lucy Worsfold, Gillian Woodward and Patrick Woodward. Pam’s current 3-year term ends in June and she has decided not to seek re-election. We are grateful for her role as a trustee over the past 6 years and glad she will remain fully involved as a schools’ presenter.

The trustees meet regularly during the year and exchange views and information at any point as the need arises covering both operational and governance matters relating to the charity.

Day to day management of the charity is undertaken by our Centre Manager Christel Coram who continues to do an excellent job in the role.

Tim Fooks, our patron, has been High Sheriff of West Sussex this year. We are so grateful to have him as a wise and experienced reference point.

Acorn continues to be registered with the Fundraising Regulator and remains a member of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations and the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy.

How is the charity funded?

Acorn receives no state funding for its work; we are reliant on donations from individuals and churches and grants from charitable trusts together with occasional donations from clients and schools.

Our annual budget of around £24k covers the wages of our Centre Manager, payments relating to one counsellor and our social media officer, rent of our office and counselling room, professional fees, insurance and administration costs. In the past year we have also had additional IT costs as we have switched to a more robust IT system. Please see our financial report for the details.


Over the last few years, we have become increasingly reliant on grants from charitable trusts to cover our costs and we want to thank The Lynn Foundation, The Souter Charitable Trust, The David Hunt Trust and Worthing Community Chest for their support last year. We also thank all those who have given to Acorn on a regular basis - it makes such a difference.


Many thanks also to Adrian Vyse (bookkeeper) and Adrian Spann (independent examiner) for their work.


What is the charity’s impact?

How do you measure impact? Clearly you can look at the number of people counselled, the number of schools visited and young people experiencing an Acorn session. You can measure the number of clicks on the website and likes on social media. We seek to do all these things.

However, what really stirs the heart is to read the comments of those who experience Acorn. On the next page are some from the last year from both male and female clients...

 *'I feel a lot lighter and able to manage not only my emotions around my miscarriages better, but I feel better equipped to deal with more general life situations too'*

 *'I am so grateful to this service and the relief it provided me when going through a particularly challenging time in my life'*

 *'The counselling has really been life changing. I have found my voice. Managing my grief in a healthy way will allow me to deal with everyday situations and possibly painful conversations'*

'Acorn counselling has been so incredibly helpful. I just wish I had known about it sooner'

'My counselling was brilliant. From the initial phone call through to the last session everyone was so nice and easy to talk to'

'Although counselling can't change what happened, it allows you to work through what happened in a safe space with someone who won't pass judgement consciously or sub-consciously like a friend or family member would. It allows you to freely discuss how you feel without any prejudice'

What are the main challenges?

Schools – despite serving local secondary schools for many years and having an excellent reputation for the quality of the sessions delivered, often due to staff changes and internal pressures it has become increasingly difficult to organise the rota of sessions with schools each year.

Counselling – whilst we try to communicate our existence in various ways, we are still aware that many people do not know of Acorn's existence.

Resources – Acorn remains reliant on a small group of committed volunteers without whom it could not function. Acorn also has a small financial supporter base. We are always looking for more people to become involved with the work and increase the resilience of the charity for the future.

Conclusion

To misquote John Donne 'No man or woman is an island'. Each person impacted by Acorn represents many others who will experience the benefits of that impact. Acorn has continued to fulfil its objectives as a charity and sought to achieve its vision in the last year.

As always, there is so much more that can be done and so many more people who can benefit and will indeed be helped from its service to the community over the next year. We remain committed to that.

Richard Marshall

Chairman

April 2026